

APPENDIX III

DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECTS' DIRECT HIT SCORES

<i>t</i> value range	<i>Frequency of above chance scores</i>	<i>Frequency of below chance scores</i>
0.00-0.24	12.5 *	11.5 *
0.25-0.49	15	12
0.50-0.74	14	13
0.75-0.99	10	12
1.00-1.24	7	5
1.25-1.49	1	8
1.50-1.74	3	2
1.75-1.99	5	4
2.00-2.24	4	2
2.25-2.49	1	1
2.50 and over	0	0
Totals	72.5	70.5
	143 subjects	

* Each of these frequencies includes a half of the 21 subjects who scored exactly chance expectation with $t=0.00$.

WHAT IS THE AGENT'S ROLE IN ESP?

A REPORT OF WORK IN PROGRESS

BY JOHN LANGDON-DAVIES

THIS experiment was designed to test certain working hypotheses suggested by previous ESP work. It is not considered strong enough in itself to bear the considerable weight of these hypotheses, but since it was successful it may be a useful basis for further experiments along the same lines.

1. It is normally assumed that the psi faculty in card-guessing experiments is an exceptional possession and that the first aim of testing should be, if possible, to discover the rare sensitive.

This, however, does not seem to fit in with the facts. There is no known reason why sensitives should be so unevenly distributed in the population as, for example, revealed by a comparison of the number of sensitives discovered in the early Rhine experiments and the number discovered by Dr Soal. Such biologically inherited characteristics as possession of absolute pitch, colour-blindness, left-handedness, are not as unevenly distributed at Duke University and London University as ESP would appear to be. (At any rate, no evidence to the contrary is known to the present writer.)

Moreover, such biological characteristics do not vary from day

to day or with environmental changes. If a known sensitive can be shown to fail in exhibiting sensitivity on certain occasions or at certain times, there is no good reason for assuming that if the right conditions could be found a hitherto proven non-sensitive would not prove to possess sensitivity.

Our own experience with card-testing suggests that there are many more people potentially sensitive among the population tested by us here in Spain than elsewhere. This gave rise at one time to the working hypothesis that we were tapping some kind of primitive stock in which this rudimentary faculty was more common than in advanced communities such as England or America. This hypothesis received a rude shock when we tested English friends and had a number of successes, although none so startling as those in Spain.

Finally, when both of us (J. L-D. and P. L-D.), after having never produced a score above Mean Chance Expectation in thousands of tests, found ourselves guessing an average of 10 per 25 cards correctly with A. Maria II, our 'universal agent', we felt the hypothesis of a primitive stratum singularly unconvincing!

I therefore decided to abandon the normal working hypothesis and to see whether it would not be more fruitful to assume that ESP ability was latent in everybody, its exhibition being an environmental and not a biological variable. If it was latent in everybody, the experimental task could be considerably eased since the experimenter could be his own guinea-pig. He could design his experiments with a view to discovering the environmental conditions which would reveal his own sensitivity.

In order to have as much experience as possible, I carried out a very considerable number of clairvoyant DT tests on myself. In spite of a quite uniformly MCE result I could not satisfy myself that the guessing was controlled by chance. It seemed more likely that the interplay of positive and negative ESP was levelling down the scores. It is after all only an assumption that the human being is at any time a pure machine obeying the calculus of probabilities. Elsewhere I have given some examples of apparently crypto-ESP in these DT experiments.

In the course of these DT tests most of the usually recognised variables were held in mind. On each score sheet a symbol was placed before the test was begun to describe the weather and my superficial physical and psychological condition. At times it was tempting to attribute minor successes and failures to hot and cold, wet and fine, good and bad temper, a good or a bad night, etc., but

none of these provided statistically significant differences, or consistent results, for long.

Nor did music, cheerful conversation, tea, alcohol, benzedrine or barbiturates show valid signs of uniform effects, although music on a few occasions seemed to raise the level for the time being. Distraction of the attention was apparently a good thing, but something more specific seemed desirable.

Nevertheless I become convinced that, if I could discover the 'knack', I would be able to produce a respectable critical ratio, and I was not prepared to abandon my working hypothesis that all human beings, and therefore myself, possessed a faculty usually rendered null by an inimical environment.

I became convinced that distraction of the conscious mind was merely the method and that this should be done in some specific way, the discovery of which was the key to the problem.

2. A second working hypothesis was suggested by the feeling that whatever the card-guessing ability might be, it could not be anything *sui generis*. It seemed unlikely that the human being possessed a special faculty for guessing the nature of unseen objects. It was much more likely that all psi ability requires the same sort of environment and that lessons therefore could be learned from studying the conditions found essential for other spontaneous and semi-spontaneous types of psi phenomena. It has always seemed to me very unwise to carry out research into laboratory psi without a considerable knowledge of spontaneous psi. After all, a controlled experiment should not be a research into entirely new material, but a new way of examining old material under controlled and more satisfactory conditions.

My second working hypothesis therefore was that card-guessing experiments might gain if carried out in conditions approximating to those found valuable for trance seances, automatic writing, spontaneous telepathy, etc. I compiled a list of physical and psychological conditions which were found helpful in the production of spontaneous and semi-spontaneous psi and resolved to test out the possibilities of their application to card-guessing. The present experiment is a first instalment of this plan. Its success makes it essential to let it be known to other workers who may be led to try other techniques along the same general lines.

I had reached this point of theorising when I was fortunate in being able to appropriate a valuable idea given me by Mrs Rosalind Heywood.

Mrs Heywood, who has done some experimenting with automatisms, very kindly agreed to give me some practical

lessons in the art. We sat down with a wine glass between us and the letters of the alphabet spread round the table. After a few preliminary canterers round the table on the part of the wine glass, Mrs Heywood said: 'You know, Mr Langdon-Davies, though it may sound silly, and indeed it *is* silly, we find that the thing works better if we address it as a person,' and she proceeded to ask the glass some leading questions to which it responded very reasonably. However, Mrs Heywood saw fit to warn me that any 'messages' might be trivial or even occasionally indecent on a first occasion, and when the wine glass had approached the first two letters of a very coarse word I lost courage and deliberately forced it towards a letter which would end the word innocuously. This cheating seemed to offend it, as nothing further resulted.

It at once occurred to me that this idea of dramatisation was a basic one in the exhibition of many types of psi phenomena, and that frequently the dramatic play required seems to involve the exteriorising of a faculty which is really a part of the sensitive's own mentality. Thus it would seem that such a faculty can be best stimulated, if, instead of appealing to it directly, for example a table is asked to reply to the questions. In the same way a secondary personality manifests most successfully as a control; the automatic writer asks questions of wine glass or ouija board; the scryer needs a *point d'appui* in a crystal.

I resolved, therefore, to try the effect on my scoring of precisely this form of dramatic approach. A DT experiment with the experimenter doing his own scoring seemed ideal to test the possible effect of dramatic exteriorisation by means of a sort of 'K object'.

It would have the great advantage over a GESP or other experiment involving an agent and other personalities that there could be no doubt that any positive result must be a function of the guesser's own mentality, and not of interplay between two or more people or anything resembling naïve telepathy.

Carington's original conception of a K object was of course that it made possible an associationism extended into two or more minds; my conception was that it could be used to build up a dramatic situation wherein impulses existing within the personality could be imagined as coming from without. Clearly the K object should be associated in some favourable way with the experimenter and the experiment; and on the analogy of other psi situations it must not be considered as a thing but a person. A photograph would be the ideal object.

I therefore wrote to Mrs Eileen Garrett, without explaining my objective, and asked her to let me have a photograph of herself, if

possible in her working surroundings. This choice of object was a natural one. Mrs Garrett, as President of the Parapsychology Foundation, New York, is responsible for my work and has shown great enthusiasm for it. Moreover, I have naturally desired to know more about her, and as I have never met her I recently bought and read two of her books. I had a respect for her psi abilities and had discussed with her by letter her own experiences with regard to card-guessing, and I had a strong feeling that some such psychological approach as I was now trying to invent might have prevented such negative results as those experienced in her work with Dr Soal in England.

THE EXPERIMENT

In order to have a basis for comparison with any results which this, and further tests to follow, might produce, I once more carried out a series of 25,000 DT trials. I had already (in 1955) carried out some 30,000 such trials and have commented on the results elsewhere.

On this occasion the trials were annotated and, as stated above, none of the more obvious variables could be shown to affect the scoring. The trials were divided into batches of 5,000 trials each, and the following are the totals of correct guesses for -1 , 0 and $+1$ guesses :

	-1	0	$+1$
1st batch of 5,000 trials	957	1,007	974
2nd " " "	989	1,003	988
3rd " " "	956	968	909
4th " " "	971	1,055	881
5th " " "	968	968	925
	4,841	5,001	4,677
Expectation per batch	960	1,000	960
Expectation for grand total	4,800	5,000	4,800

The technique I now adopted was as follows : I placed the photograph on the table before me and resolved, I confess at first rather shamefacedly, to treat it as Mrs Heywood had recommended with the wine glass.

Having shuffled the cards beneath the table or at least without looking at them, I laid them down in front of the photograph and addressed a few words to the K object, or 'agent'. I decided that the experiment should consist of 200 runs ; i.e. 5,000 guesses, so that a simple basis would exist for statistical comparison with the previous control series.

In spite of many attempts to add variety, a DT experiment as normally carried out is apt to be boring or to become an automatic performance, not unlike knitting in being 'restful' after a long day.

The atmosphere of the new experiment was very different. I found myself alternately cajoling and scolding Mrs Garrett. On one occasion I had hesitated and guessed 'square', 'wave', instead of 'wave', 'square', after having first intended to guess the correct 'wave', 'square'. I pointed this out to her and appealed to her to defeat negative ESP. I was rewarded by 10, 8, 10 in the following three runs. The test became exciting and even exhausting ; and as the last runs approached I began to fear the worst and redoubled my requests to help me fight the negativism which I felt growing in my mind. My prayer was heard and 'we' ended by guessing 99 right out of the last 400 .

The total scores in series of 8 runs of 25 trials (i.e. per 200 guesses) were as follows :

- I	0	+ I
37	48	32
34	40	37
47	42	45
31	37	41
32	44	40
28	49	40
38	44	44
36	45	50
43	40	33
36	49	39
29	45	39
35	45	34
47	51	36
38	41	39
30	41	28
45	42	48
43	39	38
39	46	31
39	45	37
41	52	35
32	42	46
32	43	38
30	43	43
40	50	53
33	49	36

The grand totals for the 200 runs were therefore :

- I	0	+ I
915	1112	982
	334	

Thus the observed deviation for 'o' guesses was 112 which gives a critical ratio of almost exactly 4, a result likely to be due to chance once in 15,771 repetitions of the experiment. It will be noticed that in the 25 series of 200 guesses only two were below MCE and they were 37 and 39 respectively.

DISCUSSION

Assuming that the very significant result was due to the major environmental variation, namely the use of a dramatic technique of exteriorising by means of a kind of K-object, we have a basis for further inquiry into the fundamental nature of ESP which is somewhat novel. Let me summarise some points that are involved.

1. ESP would appear to be something that can be elicited in people hitherto unsuspected of possessing it.

Fortunately there exist records of tens of thousands of DT and GESP trials carried out by the experimenter and there is an absolutely uniform tendency to MCE results with one exception. This exception is the experiment with A. Maria II, the 'universal agent' already described elsewhere. It is therefore known that in normal conditions none of the many variables considered (drugs, health, fatigue, weather, etc., etc.) produces significant improvement in guessing. The dramatic K-object technique unquestionably did so.

This considerably alters what has been regarded as a crippling difficulty in ESP research, namely, the scarcity of subjects. There is no reason to believe that the present experimenter is exceptional in his ability to respond to a correct experimental set-up. But it is of course not suggested that *this* set-up will be correct for others.

2. The function of the agent is once more a matter of doubt. In our experiments with P. Maria I, we were very much impressed with her equal ability in clairvoyant and GESP conditions. If the change from no-agent to agent produced less change than a number of other technical variations of far less apparent importance, could the function of the agent be as important as has usually been assumed?

Is the agent after all *not the transmitter of information but the point d'appui* required to help the percipient to use an inborn faculty or source of knowledge? Such a hypothesis would link up card-guessing with a number of other psi phenomena. It would also go some way to answer the materialist objections based on communication theory.

3. It should be noted that Mrs Garrett was not told the reason

for the request for her photograph and had no possible means of taking part in the experiment as a distant transmitter of anything. She was as free of conscious complicity as the savage whose image is being maltreated by an enemy. Indeed, the experiment for which the photograph was originally asked was not the same as the one for which it has so far been used.

It can be therefore be assumed that the sole mental source involved in the experiment was the experimenter himself who combined all the roles involved—experimenter, percipient, shuffler and scorer.

This does not mean that theories based on gestalt psychology and suggesting that the exhibition of ESP is a group-phenomenon must be ruled out. The group, which may involve everybody emotionally linked to an experiment, present or not present, would on the present hypothesis create the essential *point d'appui* for the percipient to exteriorise his faculty.

4. It would perhaps be worth while carrying out tests to see if a sheep-goat distinction can be made on the basis of people's ability to dramatise. If the internal monologue must be turned into an externalised dialogue for the exhibition of ESP ability, people able to 'talk to themselves' in this way may have an advantage over others.

Needless to say, the present theory links up with what is known about hypnosis. If we accept the findings of those who tell us that all the suggestion involved is auto-suggestion, there remains the fact that hetero-suggestion is more productive of results with most people than auto-suggestion. The hypnotiser is a *point d'appui* helping the subject to exteriorise and not a force dominating the subject.

5. It is well known that recognised sensitives whose psi gifts are well authenticated in other situations have failed in card-guessing. Perhaps this is because essentials existing in the other situations have not been preserved in this. Especially should we examine laboratory methods which are likely to militate against the exteriorisation of the subject's powers by means of the agent or experimenter. A psycho-analyst would not expect a satisfactory transference if he imposed physical and psychological distance between himself and his patient.

Since writing this report I have completed a second series of 5,000 trials with the dramatic-technique and also a further control series of 144 runs of simple DT. The 'Garrett B' series, though not as successful as the original 'Garrett A' series, showed a sufficient excess over MCE to raise at one point the over-all CR

to 4.25. The last forty runs were done in very bad emotional conditions owing to illness in the family, bad nights and considerable worry, and produced scores below MCE thereby reducing the CR for the 10,000 guesses of the two series together to 3.85. The control series of 144 runs give a result slightly below MCE as is usual with the writer's guessing tests. Thus the previous results are confirmed.

18 April 1956

N.B. At Dr Soal's suggestion I add that the correct guesses for the first and last card in the pack, the only ones from which a sensory leakage can be readily imagined, are both slightly below the average for the other 23 cards.

POSTSCRIPT

I have just received the *Journal of Parapsychology* for March 1956 and note the following sentences in Dr Louisa E. Rhine's article. They seem to be relevant to such researches as described above.

This survey of telepathy cases has pointed in the main to the percipient rather than the agent as the active initiating person in telepathic exchange. . . This view of the role of the percipient would be in line with the one he plays in clairvoyant experiences.

Further experiments have been carried out in which the experimenter-percipient 'splits his personality' into one which guesses very fast (as fast as the pencil can fill in the score sheet) and one which guesses deliberately two guesses at a time. Although neither Fast nor Slow shows significantly larger score than his opponent, *both* do better than the experimenter's undivided self and the sum of their results for 2,000 guesses gives a CR of four standard deviations. It is hoped to describe this and other experiments in dramatized 'self-inflicted' D.T. later.

9 June 1956

SURVEY OF SPONTANEOUS CASES

THE Council have now prepared their plan for putting into effect the recommendation made last year by the Cambridge Conference for a new enquiry on a large scale into spontaneous cases, and intend to proceed with this plan at once. The object of the plan is to

obtain a large number of recent cases of apparitions, premonitions and other kindred phenomena occurring spontaneously. Phenomena which are clearly physical, e.g. those of the poltergeist type, do not fall within the scope of the enquiry, nor do phenomena resulting from mediumship.

The first stage will be the distribution of forms with a few simple questions. These forms have been drawn up in consultation with the American S.P.R., which in accordance with the Cambridge resolutions is conducting a parallel enquiry in the United States. The forms when completed are to be returned to the Society's rooms, where they will be classified according to whether the replies are affirmative or negative, and, if affirmative, according to the type of the experience and of the event, if any, to which it apparently corresponds: for instance, the apparition of a man seen at the time of his death.

Cases that seem to be of interest will then be followed up on the lines traditionally followed by the S.P.R., enquiries being made, for example, as to details of the experience or event that may not have been given precisely enough in the reply, as to corroboration, etc. When the stage of verifying the facts has been completed, the cases will be examined for possible psychological motives. The opinion was expressed at the Cambridge Conference that this aspect had not received sufficient attention in previous enquiries, such as the Census of Hallucinations, reported in Vol. X of S.P.R. *Proceedings*. In this respect, therefore, the enquiry is breaking new ground.

In addition to our Society and the American S.P.R. an International Committee, of which our Corresponding Member Mr G. Zorab is Chairmain, is pursuing a similar enquiry. The three bodies are acting in close co-operation.

The Council hope that many members of the Society and subscribers to the Journal will wish to take part. **Those resident in the United Kingdom** can obtain the question forms on application to the Secretary.

Members and subscribers **residing elsewhere** will, it is hoped, also wish to co-operate, though distance and differences of local conditions may make it more difficult in some countries to follow up cases in the way outlined above. Those who wish to co-operate are at liberty, of course, to do so through whichever of the three bodies they prefer. It is suggested, however, that residents anywhere in the United States, Canada, and the West Indies should communicate with the American S.P.R. (880 Fifth Avenue, New York 21), residents in the Commonwealth other than Canada and the West Indies, with the S.P.R. in London,

and residents in other countries with the International Committee (Mr G. Zorab, Verdistraat 32, The Hague, Holland). Those residing outside the United Kingdom who wish to co-operate through the S.P.R. are invited to look out for spontaneous cases and to send to the S.P.R. reports on any that they regard as adequately corroborated and otherwise suitable.

REVIEWS

MIND IN LIFE AND DEATH. A Refutation of Scientific Materialism through Empirical Evidence. By Geraldine Cummins. London, Aquarian Press, 1956. 269 pp. 21s.

This book is written with passion and obvious sincerity by a lady well known for her remarkable automatic writings, and for the cases, a number of which have appeared in this *Journal*, in which she has provided a sitter with information about the deceased, which it is hard to believe could have been known to either sitter or automatist.

Here, as will be seen from the sub-title, she is crusading gallantly against those Dogs of Unbelievers, the scientific materialists, who will not accept as conclusive the evidence for survival provided by mediumship and spontaneous cases. We humble agnostics, moreover, who do not 'know' either way, also find ourselves rolling in the dust alongside them. This, then, is not a book of research, but is openly intended to prove a point. What can the researcher learn from it? It is mainly a collection of cases, some from S.P.R. records, others from Miss Cummins's own work, which are offered as evidence for survival, with her comments on each. She also discusses the views of some notable psychical researchers on the subject, in the light of her own. Though some of us may not find it possible to share her views, we shall find her personal cases, some of them printed for the first time, of the deepest interest. Here again we have such items as pet names, place of death, personal idiosyncracies, wishes for the disposal of possessions, and other intimate information, which to the best of their belief was unknown to automatist or sitter, and which was subsequently verified. We have also, though not enough of it, some account of Miss Cummins's psychological experience of her own automatisms; her impression, for example, that her writing for sitters came from one 'level', her historical scripts from another. She also describes the conditions in which she writes most easily, her impressions of sitters and investigators as 'good' and 'bad', and so on. The reviewer could have wished